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11 May 1951

SUBJECT: Likelihood of a Soviet Attack on Japan in the Near Future
(Draft incorporating Agency comments)

1. On 10 February 1951, we estimated that the USSR had the capability "of conducting a major amphibious airborne offensive against Japan; simultaneously assaulting Hokkaido and northern Honshu; or of invading Hokkaido first, to be followed by an invasion of Honshu". Since the date of that estimate no marked changes in Soviet capabilities for such an attack have become known to us except as noted below, nor are there reliable indications of a Soviet intention to launch such an attack in the near future.

2. There has been no known enlargement of the Soviet Far East air strength, except in Manchuria. Soviet units remain so deployed as to be able to support an attack on Japan and have recently increased their capabilities by intensified training activities. Communist air capabilities for operating within Manchuria have been substantially increased by the introduction of jet fighter aircraft, now estimated at 260. Recent indications point towards the employment of Communist air forces against Korea rather than against Japan. Such employment would not,

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however, exclude the possibility of simultaneous Soviet air support of an assault on Japan.

3. The USSR has reacted against the US proposals for a Japanese Peace Treaty much as it reacted against the proposed rearmament of West Germany. The Note handed to Ambassador Kirk by Bogomolov on May 7 advances no new arguments, and is not a particularly offensive document in terms of Soviet diplomacy. It does not bear the characteristics of an ultimatum, neither does it in any way suggest a Soviet intention to take direct military action against Japan.

4. Although there are no firm indications of an imminent Soviet attack on Japan, and although we are unable to determine whether the Soviets plan such an attack, the Kremlin may judge the coming weeks favorable for exerting severe diplomatic and propaganda pressure upon the US and its allies, and possibly for an attack on Japan.

(a) The Kremlin may believe that the new US commander in Japan has not had time to win the confidence of the Japanese people, who may therefore be unusually susceptible to threats or intimidation.

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(b) The Kremlin might well believe that the governments of the NATO countries would, in face of threats from the USSR, not support the US proposed peace treaty with Japan, and in general that the NATO governments would oppose any US action which they considered would increase the risk of the expansion of the Korean war.

(c) The Kremlin may believe that the US is so anxious to avoid war with the USSR that the US would make great concessions if subjected to sufficient pressure. The Kremlin may conceivably believe that the US is so divided on Far Eastern policy that it might be unable to put forth a united effort in the event of war.

5. As a result of recent Communist reverses in Korea, the Kremlin may consider it necessary to give greater support to the Chinese Communists. It may estimate that increasing military threats against Japan would reduce the pressure on the Chinese Communists in Korea.

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6. Although the USSR still is estimated to have the capability of launching an attack on Japan, and might do so, we have no evidence of the likelihood of such an attack in the near future. However, we do believe that the Kremlin will, during the coming weeks and months, increase its diplomatic and propaganda pressure against the proposed Japanese Peace Treaty, and that such pressure may well include strong threats of an invasion of Japan.

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